



Northern Connections

A Transnational Cluster Cooperation

- Unlocking the potential for regional innovation



We are a partnership of 22 clusters, cities, regions and knowledge institutions, and we work together to create innovation connections between our enterprises and clusters in the energy sector.

We aim to increase the innovation potential across borders. We look into how we can involve enterprises from different countries in our living labs - and we develop tools for our clusters, hence, they can provide the right support for the enterprises.



Partners in Northern Connections

Interreg
North Sea Region
Northern Connections

European Regional Development Fund



EUROPEAN UNION





Our objective is to get more enterprises to participate in transnational innovation collaboration by strengthening transnational cluster and city/region cooperation.

Main output is building capacity and transnational relations of sustainable energy clusters to provide demand-led innovation support. This creates the foundation for involving more SMEs in innovation. Develop broader political backing using northern connections to create coherence between political ambitions and cluster potential for innovation support.



The joint challenge

- Innovation support is mainly applied within narrow geographies.
- Calls to action /innovation challenges and opportunities are not visible transnationally.
- Cities & clusters lack capacity to involve SMEs broadly.





The agenda

- Test the use of domestic innovation transnationally/in another country.
- Transnational innovation support measures.
- Address barriers to competition which exist between clusters and regions.





The approach

- **Strengthen** transnational cluster and city/region cooperation.
- **Bridge** private and public sector on transnational innovation support.
- **Improve** and align innovation support measures.
- **Create** incentives for transnational SME innovation partnerships to collaborate.
- **Establish** a critical mass of innovation activity on a transnational basis.
- **Pilot** joint transnational innovation support measures .
- **To Create** coherence in political ambitions and cluster potential for innovation support.



Our WP's

WP1 – Project Management (Aalborg Municipality)

WP2 – Communication (CLEAN Cluster)

WP3 – Knowledge (HafenCity University, OREEC)

WP4 – Cluster Capacity (Gothenburg Municipality)

WP5 – Political & strategic capacity (Schleswig-Holstein)

WP6 – Living Labs (Renewable Energy Hamburg, INNOVATUM)



Our activities

Expanding our knowledge base

- We will support the knowledge transfer between the cities and regions, the clusters and academia. Regional innovation strategies (RIS3) focus on the strengths of a region – they seldom consider the synergies with neighbouring regions and the potential of transnational cooperation.
- We will therefore expand our knowledge on how RIS3 can support internationalisation and how clusters can use this. These findings will provide valuable input to the capacity building on political and strategic level.
- We also intend to dig deeper into how clusters support SME internationalization and innovation participation. This will provide a basis for cluster capacity building.

Our activities

Building political and strategic capacity

- By bringing together regions, cities and clusters, we can create the basis for discussing how smart specialisation strategies can be optimised to support SME innovation across borders.
- Our aim is to stimulate the international competitiveness of the region and extend the innovation collaboration between clusters, regions and cities.
- We will develop and test new practices for building an international dimension into regional smart specialisation strategies, with a particular focus on living labs and how a coordinated effort from clusters and cities play a key role in this.

[See the Policy Recommendations and Tools HERE.](#)



Our activities

Building cluster capacity for innovation

- The participating clusters will jointly develop and test tools to improve SME's innovation skills and in doing so also build their own capacity for regional innovation support.
- Activities entail identification of existing innovation support measures – specified per renewable energy technology (RET) value chain and covering each step of the innovation chain on Technology Readiness Level 5-9.
- The activities will also lead to an understanding of how to develop and carry out interregional innovation activities for SMEs around innovation support measures already tied into regional RET value and innovation chains.
- A model for synergetic interregional cooperation, where SMEs can profit from innovation and business opportunities through the alignment of interregional innovation and value chains is unique. It will contribute significantly to existing projects and initiatives.

Our activities

The Cluster Toolbox

- The Northern Connections Toolbox is a best practice collection across the implicated clusters in the Northern Connections project.
- The purpose of the Toolbox is to create a setup of practical and manageable tools about matchmaking, knowledge sharing and idea creation.
- These tools will describe how to make certain event set-ups, how to estimate the resource consumption and indicate what kind of actors should participate.
- The overall aim of creating this toolbox is to inspire and learn from each other and the toolbox should thereby take act as a component of knowledge sharing.

[See the Cluster Toolbox HERE.](#)



Our activities

The Living Labs

- Through our Living Labs, we set practices on involving SMEs in solving energy challenges of cities and regions. A sustainable energy Living Lab is a real demonstration project with actual industry investments, technologies and experts - it is not merely a demonstration project, that is static and limited to its existing partners.
- The Living Labs provide, to SMEs, access to an early phase of developing a pool of solutions towards public and private sector challenges. The challenges are made accessible through open-solution pitches and carried out throughout the North-Sea region. Living Labs create a true marketplace, where public and private sector challenge owners can see what the market can offer.
- The identification of the Living Labs have been a process. We have through our project time already held more than 10 Living Lab Events with great success, where a lot of innovative companies have participated and established new business collaborations with big challenge owners.

[See all the Living Labs HERE.](#)





Northern Connections' output

- **Build** capacity and transnational relations of sustainable energy clusters to provide demand-led innovation support.
- **Develop** broader political backing.
- **Support** innovation in SMEs.
- **Create** a model for synergetic interregional cooperation, where SMEs profit from innovation and business opportunities.
- **Contribute** to existing projects and initiatives like Enterprise Europe Network and European Cluster of Excellence Initiative.



Thank you for your time – and goodbye!

@NorthseaConnect
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